Washington State Conservation Commission
Irrigation Efficiencies Grants Program
Update for May 2005

Policy Issues:
Several policy issues have been under discussion since my last update in December:

- How can we make the program more effective
- January 31st planning meeting
- Criteria adjustments
- Watershed surveys
- Application Consolidation
- Stockwater eligibility
- How can the program be an effective tool for drought response
  - ~ Geographic Priority Areas
  - ~ Eligibility Protocol
  - ~ Financial incentive
  - ~ Administration of match funds
- Contracting with Walla Walla Community College to perform the data collection, analysis, and preliminary design of all project proposals statewide.

Ecology Partnership:
Jon has been working with Ecology to enhance the process by which saved water is placed in the State's Trust Water Rights program. The Consolidated application format is in its final stages of completion. This will allow all parties to more effectively share data on all aspects of the project. This should also reduce the amount of paperwork necessary to process each project, thereby working toward complying with the sustainability mandate. The program has also increased its level of communication with Ecology's regional staff. This has served well in determining the trustability of the right, investigate third-party impairment, assist with the formal water rights investigation, and help the team understand any regional issues affecting the right in question or the stream reach involved. Ecology's relationship with the Department of Fish and Wildlife has allowed for a determination of geographic priority to be produced specifically for our program for drought response. The biologist involved is a member of our Technical Advisory Committee and understands our program quite well. Because of this, his priority list takes into account the program abilities and limitations to pointedly identify key portions of stream reaches where an increase in flows provided by the BMPs we can install will assist in drought mitigation.

Budget:
The legislature passed their budget to reappropriate all unspent program funds, and to appropriate $3.5 million new dollars to the cause. These amounts will be pared back slightly to accommodate Ecology's participation through the next

biennium and two other small programs listed in the appropriation. Ecology will not have the exact figures until sometime in September.

Contracts:
The following contracts have been entered into since the last update in December.

Stream Name	***County***	***Qi (cfs)***	***Qa (acre feet/yr)***	***Cost Share requested***
Dungeness River	Clallam	1.11	24.39	$20,164
Totals:		*1*	*24.39*	*$20,164*

One contract, just signed by the Kittitas County Conservation District board and is on its way to Olympia, places 1 cubic foot per second and 110 acre feet per year of water savings into trust for flow increases in Taneum Creek.

Technical Advisory Committee:
The TAC has been working on the data consolidation process and working on ways to make the program run more effectively. The group met in February and March to discuss the comments made at the January 31st planning meeting in Ellensburg. They have also played a key role in formulating the program's drought response protocol, which is attached.

Project Descriptions

Taneum Creek:

According to Perry Harvester (WDFW), "Taneum Creek is identified as a high priority stream for instream flow restoration in the Water Acquisition Program, as well as most other restoration programs in the Yakima River Basin. There is an extensive amount of habitat that is under-utilized in the upper watershed for summer steelhead, Coho, and perhaps spring Chinook due to limited flow and poor passage conditions. It is recognized by state, federal, and tribal biologists that Taneum Creek has the potential to provide significant salmonid production if passage and instream flows problems are resolved." Because of the potential for fish benefit exists the Kittitas County Conservation District continues to seek out more efficiency projects like this and the past Wheatley phase 1 project. "Achieving further participation in water conservation projects by landowners of the Taneum Canal Company is a necessary component for future instream flow improvements in Taneum Creek [as they have most of the remaining water rights available]" (Harvester).

This contract was negotiated at the 85% cost share rate, resulting in the placement of **1.0** cubic feet per second (Qi) and **110.95** acre feet (Qa) into the State's Water Trust , with the water right holder agreeing to place 100% of the net water savings to trust after May 15th of each irrigation season. The project will convert 104.6 acres of rill irrigated farmland into 104.6 acres under center pivot irrigation sprinkler systems. This water savings will remain as instream flows in Taneum Creek from May 16th through November 15th, per the Taneum Canal Company's adjudicated right. Jim Lyerla's March 15, 2005 letter reveals the validity and extent of the right in question as having been used to its full extent in the 1999 irrigation season. It also alludes to the fact that Mr. Wheatley will retain the use of 27.36 acre feet of water from this right to pre-irrigate prior to May 15th of each irrigation season. The remainder of the irrigation season, May 16th through November 15th, 100% of Mr. Wheatley's share of the Company right will remain instream. Suzanne Blakeney, the Trust Water Rights Coordinator for the Central Region, has been helpful in the negotiation of trustable water quantities throughout the data collection and contract negotiation phases of this project.

This project has met and exceeded the standard and new scrutiny applied to all projects seeking approval for funding through the Commission's Efficiencies program. As you can see in the contract, the District is seeking cost share of $209,200 for a contract period of 20 years, through 2025. Also, the Trust Water Application for this project has been received and accepted by the Ecology Central Regional Office in Yakima and entered into the WRAT system.